

THE Silent Shore

or,
the Mystery of St. James' Park

By JNO. BLOUNDELLE-BURTON

"To die is landing on a silent shore,
Where billows never beat, nor
tempests rear."

try and get a clue to the murderer. Amongst others, he noticed one young man who was particularly grief-stricken, and who was constantly appealed to by those who surrounded him; and, on asking a fellow-member who he was, he learnt that he was a Mr. Stuart, the secretary of his dead brother. It happened that he had been brought into the club by a man who had known Cundall well.

"To-morrow," Penlyn heard him say, and he started as he heard it. "I am going to make a thorough investigation of all his papers. As far as I or his city agents know, he hadn't a relative in the world; but surely his correspondence must give us some idea of whom to communicate with. And, until this morning, I should have said he had not got an enemy in the world either."

"You think, then, that this dastardly murder is the work of an enemy, and not for mere robbery?" the gentleman asked who had brought him into the club.

"I am sure of it! As to the workman who is supposed to have done it—well, if he did it, he was only a woman in disguise. No! he had some enemy, perhaps some one who owed him money, or whose path he had been enabled by his wealth to cross, and that is the man who killed him. And, by the grace of Heaven, I am going to find that man out."

Penlyn still sat there, and as he heard Stuart utter these words he felt upon what a precipice he stood. Suppose that, in the papers which were about to be ransacked, there should be any that proved that Walter Cundall was his eldest brother, and that he, Penlyn, had only learnt it two days before he was murdered. Would not everything point to him as the Cain who had slain his brother, and was he not making appearances worse against him by keeping silence? He must tell some one, he could keep the horrible secret no longer. And he must have the sympathy of some one dear to him: he would confide in Ida! Surely, she would not believe him to be the murderer of his own brother! Yes, he would go down to Belmont and tell her all. Better it should come from him than that Stuart should discover it, and publish it to the world.

"I hope you may find him out," said a man said in answer to Stuart's exclamation. "The brute deserves something worse than hanging. If Cundall's murderer gets off, it is the wickedest thing that ever happened." Then one said: "Is there any clue likely to be got at through the wound?"

"No," Stuart answered. "I think not. Though the surgeon who has examined it says that it was made by no ordinary knife or dagger."

"What does he think it was, then?" they asked.

"He says the wound is more like those he has seen in the East. The dagger, he thinks, must have been semi-circular and of a kind the Arabs often use, especially the Algerian Arab."

"I never knew that!" one said: "but then I have never been to Algiers. Who has? Here, Penlyn, you were there once, weren't you?"

"Yes," Penlyn said, and his tongue seemed to cleave to the root of his

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mouth as he uttered the words: "but I never saw or heard of a knife or dagger of that description."

Stuart looked at Lord Penlyn as he spoke, and noticed the faltering way in which he did so. Then, in a moment, the thought flashed into his mind that this was the man who had won the woman whom his generous friend and patron had loved. Could he—but no, the idea was ridiculous! He was the winner, Cundall the loser. Successful men had no reason to kill their unsuccessful rivals!

CHAPTER IX.

After a wretched night spent in tossing about his bed in dreaming of the murdered man, and in lying awake wondering how he should break the news to Ida, Lord Penlyn rose with the determination of going down to Belmont. But when the valet brought him his bath he told him that Mr. Smerdon had arrived from Occleve Chase at six o'clock, and would meet him at breakfast. So, when he heard this, he dressed quickly and went to his friend.

"Good Heavens!" Phillip said, when he saw him. "How ill you look! What is the matter?"

"Matter?" the other answered. "Is there not matter enough to make me look ill? I have told you that Cundall is dead, and you know how he died. 'Yes, I know. But surely you must be aware of what it has freed you from.'"

"It has freed me from nothing. I read this word that not have freed me equally as well?" and he handed him the letter that his brother had written a few hours before his death.

The other's face darkened as he read, and then he said:

"He was a man of noble impulses; but they were only impulses! Woe! you have felt sure while he lived that he might not alter his mind again at any moment!"

"Yes! He loved Ida, and I do not believe he was a man who would have ever loved another woman. I should have been safe in his hands."

Then they began to talk about the murder itself, and Smerdon asked who was suspected, or if any one was.

"No," Penlyn said, "no one is suspected as yet. A laborer was seen following him on that night, and suspicion naturally falls on him, because if he did not do it himself, he must have been close at hand, and would have helped him or given an alarm. There is only one road through the park, which they must both have taken."

"Is there any trace of this man?"

"None whatever, up to last night. Meanwhile his friend and secretary, Mr. Stuart, says that he is confident that the murder was committed by some one who had reason to wish him out of the way, and he is going through his papers to-day to see if any of them can throw any light on such an enemy."

"He cannot, I suppose, find anything that can do you any harm?"

"Supposing he finds those certificates he showed us?"

"Supposing he does! You are Lord Penlyn now, at any rate. And it would give you an opportunity of putting in a claim to his property. You are his heir, if he has left no will."

"His heir! To all his immense wealth?"

"Certainly."

"I shall never claim it, and I hope to God he has destroyed every proof of our relationship."

"Why?"

"Why! Because will not the fact that I held a position which belonged to him, and was the heir to all his money—of which I never thought till this moment—give the world cause for suspecting?"

"What?"

"That I am his murderer."

"Nonsense! I suppose you could prove where you were at the time of his death?"

"No, I could not. I entered the hotel at two, but there was not a creature in the house awake. I could hear the porter's snores on the floor above."

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and there is not a living soul to prove whether I was in at three or not."

"Nor whether you were out! If they all asleep, what evidence could they give on either side?"

"Even though there should be no evidence, how could I go through life with the knowledge that every one regarded me as his unproved murderer?"

"You look at the matter too seriously. To begin with, after that letter he wrote you, he would very likely destroy all proofs of his identity."

"He had no chance. He was murdered, in all probability—indeed must have been—a quarter of an hour after he posted it in Wall Mall."

"He might have destroyed them before—when he made up his mind to write the letter."

"Certainly, he might have done so. But I am not going to depend upon his having destroyed them. This secret must be told by me, and I am going to Belmont to-day to tell it to Ida."

"You must be mad, I think!" Smerdon said, speaking almost angrily to him. "This secret, which only came to light a week ago, is now buried for ever, and since he is dead, can never be brought up again. For what earthly reason should you tell Miss Ranshington anything about it?"

"Because she ought to know," the other answered weakly. "It is only right that she should know."

"That you were not Lord Penlyn when you became engaged to her, but that you are now. And that Cundall being your brother, you must mourn him as a brother, and consequently your marriage must be postponed for at least a year. Is that what you mean?"

Lord Penlyn started. "This had never entered into his head, and was certainly not what he would have meant or desired. Postponed for a year! when he was dying to make her his wife, when the very thought that his brother might step in and interrupt his marriage had been the cause of his brutality of speech to him. It had not been the impending loss of lands and position that had made him speak as he had done, he had told himself many times of late; it had been the fear of losing his beloved Ida. And now that there was nothing to stand between them, he was himself about to place an obstacle in the way, an obstacle that should endure for at least a year. Smerdon was right, his quick mind had grasped what he would never have thought of—quite right! he would do well to say nothing about his relationship to the dead man. It is remarkable how easily we agree with those who show us the way to further our own ends!"

"I never thought of that," he said, "and I could not bear it. After all, he went on weakly, 'you are right! I do not see any necessity to say anything about it, and he himself forbade me to do so.'"

"There is only one thing, though," Smerdon said, "which is that, if you do not proclaim yourself his brother, I cannot see how you are to be the possessor of his money."

"Don't think about it—I will never become possessed of it. It may go to any one but me to some distant relative. If any can be found, or to the Crown, or whatever it is that takes a man's money when he is without kin, but never to me. He was right when he said that I had been Jacob to his Esau all my life, but I will take no more from him, even though he is dead."

"Quite odd and ridiculous ideas!" Smerdon said. "In fact you and he had remarkably similar traits of character. Extremely quixotic, unless you have some strong reason for not claiming his millions. For instance, if you had really murdered him I could understand such a determination. But I suppose you did not do that!"

Lord Penlyn looked up and saw his friend's eyes fixed on him, with almost an air of mockery in them. Then he said:

"I want you to understand one thing, Phillip. There must be no banner nor jelling on this subject. Even though I must hold my peace for ever, I still regard it as an awful calamity that has fallen upon me. If I could do so, I would set every detective in London to work to try and find the man who killed him indeed, if it were not for Ida's sake, I should proclaim myself his brother to-morrow."

"But for Ida's sake you will not do so?"

"For Ida's sake, and for the reason Continued on Fourth Page.

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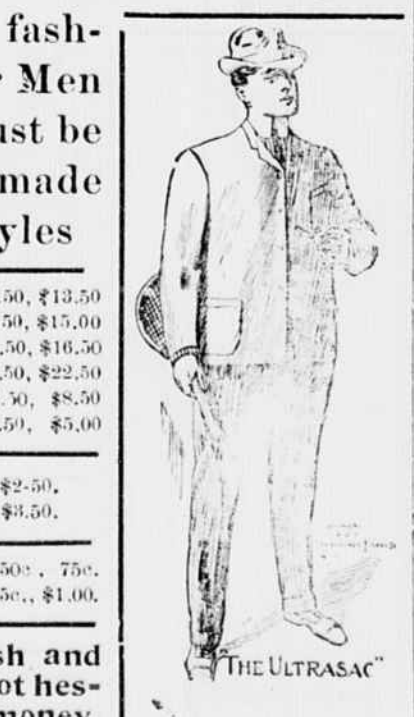
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